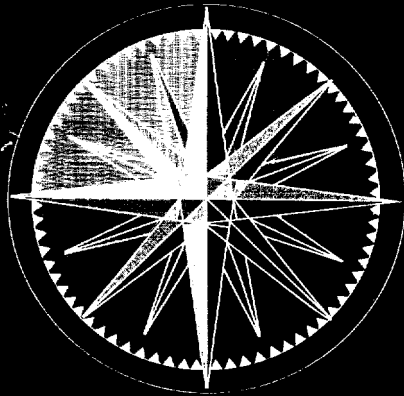


SECRET

Release 2006/08/22 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004400040003-9



20 March 1964

OCI No. 0323/64B

Copy No. 61

SPECIAL REPORT

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

25X1

SECRET

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

Approved For Release 2006/08/22 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004400040003-9

Page Denied

Approved For Release 2006/08/22 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004400040003-9

SECRET

20 March 1964

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP AND THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM

The men who rule Communist China are all first-generation, old-guard party revolutionaries. These senior citizens are beginning to lose their vigor at a time when their responsibility for finding solutions to China's intractable problems is especially heavy. Most of the 18 members of the politburo--the party's elite ruling body--are in their 60s or 70s, and all have been with the party at least 30 years. Most served together as political commissars or military commanders during the wars against Japan and the Nationalist government. All are intensely nationalistic and appear deeply committed to a militant brand of Communism, but some seem to take a somewhat more moderate approach to particular problems.

Leadership differences in themselves do not appear great enough to spark a struggle for power when Mao Tse-tung dies or retires fully. Even so, because no other leader has anything like Mao's stature and prestige, the removal of his unifying influence could introduce a period of disorder marked by debilitating purges. The regime is deeply concerned about the succession problem, because Mao--who was 70 on 26 December 1963--has weakened both mentally and physically in recent years.

Mao's designated successor is Liu Shao-chi, who has already assumed the top position in the government--but not in the party. After Liu, the line of succession apparently runs to Secretary General Teng Hsiao-ping, a member of the radical group which controls the party apparatus--the main instrument of power in Communist China.

What little is known about second-echelon leaders who fill top posts in the bureaucracy just below the politburo suggests that they are probably just as dedicated and extreme as their superiors. Their core is a group, reportedly numbering 800, who participated in the Long March 30 years ago when Mao was driven from his base of operations in Central China to Yen-an in the Northwest. Most of these men, who were junior officers then, now are in their late 40s and 50s.

second-echelon leaders, subject throughout their careers to indoctrination and strict party discipline, have been even more insulated from contact with the outside world than the men at the top.

25X1

25X1

SECRET

SECRET

Leadership Stability

Peiping is proud of the leadership's record of comparative stability. It has intimated that, because of this record, China is better qualified than the USSR to lead the world Communist movement. Mao Tse-tung the undisputed leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since 1935, was a charter member of the party when it was formed in 1921. Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai have held positions of trust since the mid-1920s. Teng Hsiao-ping, fourth in the present hierarchy, is a relative newcomer. He came to

the fore in the 1930s and reached the Standing Committee--the super-politburo--in 1956.

While the turnover in top positions has indeed been small, the Chinese try to make it appear even smaller by the simple device of not dropping inactive members from the politburo except when they die. Several are inactive because they are old, sick, or out of favor. Nevertheless, even former Minister of National Defense Peng Te-huai, who was dismissed from his post in 1959 and who is obviously in disgrace, is still listed as a member.



毛泽东同志和他的亲密战友

新华社记者 杜修贤摄

Chinese Communist Party unity is stressed in this commonly displayed photo of the entire Standing Committee, labeled "Mao's Close Comrades-in-Arms." From left to right, party elder Chu Teh, Premier Chou En-lai, the sidelined Chen Yun, Liu Shao-chi, Mao Tse-tung, Party Secretary General Teng Hsiao-ping, and the chronically sick Lin Biao.

640306 78

SECRET

Another remarkable attribute of top Chinese leaders, besides their long continuity of service, is their ability to present a united front in the face of internal and external problems. In part, this trait reflects the care with which Mao has always selected subordinates, but it is also a tribute to his ability to inspire loyalty. In the past 25 years, only three members of the real inner circle (Mao's closest lieutenants) have been removed from positions of influence. These are Kao Kang, purged in 1953, and Peng Te-huai and top economic specialist Chen Yun, both of whom lost favor in 1959.

Occasional reports of factionalism--in the sense of active competition by disciplined groups--seem to be essentially conjectures based on the supposition that there must be some leaders who believe that Mao's decisions to launch the Leap Forward and to challenge the Soviets were inopportune and even disastrous. However, the limited available evidence does not indicate that differences of opinion have hardened into factionalism.

The regime's anti-Soviet stand, despite its harmful effects on China's national interests, has been strongly endorsed by all of Mao's immediate subordinates. The Soviets themselves have conceded that they can find little trace of willingness to accommodate at top levels of the Chinese party. Soviet polemical attacks on China have criticized Mao, Liu and Chou by name, suggesting

that Moscow sees no chance of encouraging a split at the top level. In its domestic propaganda Moscow has suggested that one of the reasons Chinese leaders now are hostile is that over the years Mao has purged immediately any leader who became a friend of the USSR.

Differences

Mao has never tolerated persistent opposition to any major policy line and there is no indication of active opposition now. Top leaders have long exhibited temperamental differences, however, which tend to divide them into distinct though not necessarily opposing groups of radicals and comparative moderates. The influence of both groups can be detected in current domestic and foreign policies, which contain an eclectic mixture of doctrinaire and pragmatic elements.

The radical grouping, led by Liu Shao-chi and Teng Hsiao-ping, has clearly dominated in recent years. It is in firm control of the party apparatus and it tends to be the group favored by Mao. Men in this group share fundamentalist, militant views. Like Stalin in many ways, they are naturally disposed toward ambitious industrial goals, but the succession of economic disasters in 1960 and 1961 caused them to retreat grudgingly from such goals and to place heavier emphasis on security and ideological problems. Thus they are preoccupied with preserving what they believe is pure Marxism-

SECRET

SECRET

Leninism, with conducting political campaigns against "class enemies"--still in their view a major threat--and with weeding out unreliable or wavering elements from the armed forces and the party. Their hostility to Soviet leaders is based in part on a seemingly genuine conviction that the Soviets are ideological backsliders and traitors to the world Communist movement.

Premier Chou En-lai has appeared to head a moderate grouping that is believed to include, at the politburo level, Foreign Minister Chen Yi, Finance Minister Li Hsien-nien, and Li Fu-chun, the regime's top economic spokesman and planner. (It included Chen Yun, too, before his decline.) In describing Chou as a moderate, allowance should be made for the fact that his position as premier permits him less opportunity than some other party leaders to manifest his ideological fervor and that he has always faithfully supported even the most radical of Mao's policies. It is nevertheless apparent, from a long record of public and private statements, that he consistently feels less attracted to radical solutions than are Mao, Liu, and Teng.

Chou's pragmatism--when he is allowed to exercise it--supplies a useful balance to the leadership. He is more willing than the rest to modify doctrine that is highly unrealistic when applied to China. For example, Chou apparently finds it easier than other leaders to recognize that overpopulation is a serious

and long-term problem for China, and to dispute the orthodox Marxist view that it can be a problem only in capitalist societies. Chou is the only top leader to have ever publicly endorsed birth control and is the chief backer of the birth control campaign instituted in 1963. This campaign must certainly have the silent endorsement of other leaders, or at least of Mao, but at the same time these men are undoubtedly more sensitive than Chou to its anti-Marxist taint. In September 1963, Soviet propaganda exploited this point by charging that current Chinese population control measures, including male sterilization, are "incompatible with a Marxist approach."

Chou En-lai is more sophisticated than his colleagues and has a greater awareness of the outside world. As a result, he is particularly persuasive with foreigners and has a special appeal to Chinese intellectuals, attributes shared by his foremost current associate on the politburo, Chen Yi. Chou and Chen have long demonstrated a flair for creating an aura of good will for China abroad. Their recent successful swing through Africa and South Asia contrasts with Liu Shao-chi's colorless, ineffectual performance in this regard last spring during a tour of Southeast Asia. Mao has never visited a non-Communist country, nor has Teng Hsiao-ping since his student days in Paris. Chou and Chen are the politburo spokesmen usually chosen to represent the

SECRET

SECRET

regime when it wants to conciliate intellectuals.

Chou's willingness to oppose the USSR in recent years is probably based chiefly on nationalistic grounds--that is, on territorial disputes, on Soviet efforts to control Chinese foreign policy and military forces, and on Soviet refusal to back up China against India and the US. Although anti-Soviet, he would be unlikely to feel as strongly as Mao, Liu, and Teng about the ideological aspects of the dispute or share their conviction that the leadership in Moscow is permitting Soviet society to backslide dangerously. Soviet officials have said they would rather deal with Chou than with either Mao or Liu, because he is more flexible and intelligent. This distinction is reflected in Soviet propaganda, which has dealt less harshly with Chou than with either Mao or Liu.

The Aging Leadership

The men at the top may have their differences, but they also have one important thing in common: They are all old-guard, first-generation Communists, who are reaching an age where they must realize that a new leadership generation is almost at hand. Since 1958, when the newest members were elected, two politburo members have died and several others are too old to play an active role any longer. This latter group includes the party elders Chu Teh and Tung Pi-wu, the superannuated Marshal Liu Po-cheng, and probably Marshal Ho Lung. Minister of National De-

fense Lin Piao, who is at 56 the youngest member of the politburo, has chronic tuberculosis. In view of their age, even those who are still active will be increasingly sidelined with ailments. Illness may account for the unexplained failure of top economic spokesman Li Fu-chun to make any public appearances during a five-month period in 1963.

The state of Mao Tse-tung's mental and physical health, which has an important bearing on Chinese domestic policy and Sino-Soviet relations, has been in question for some years. Although Peiping propaganda has consistently portrayed him as vigorous and healthy, there was strong evidence in the mid-1950s of several bouts of illness, possibly including a stroke or two, and he has declined noticeably in physical vigor and mental acuity since 1957. In 1960 and 1961, Moscow conducted a whispering campaign against Mao, intimating that he was senile. His frequent public appearances--they have increased since 1962--believe the charge, however, and Moscow, perhaps realizing that it is dangerous to belittle its adversary, has dropped this line of attack. Mao appears in fair health, and while his grasp of details seems to be slipping, his leadership has apparently not been disputed.

The best evidence that Mao has declined, aside from the bad judgment shown in his domestic and anti-Soviet policy decisions after 1957, lies in his record

SECRET

POLITBURO OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
(listed according to party rank)

STANDING COMMITTEE

FULL MEMBERS	AGE	CHIEF ROLE	TOP POSTS
MAO TSE-TUNG	70	Party	Chairman, Central Committee of the CCP
LIU SHAO-CHI	66	Party	Chairman, Chinese Peoples Republic
CHOU EN-LAI	66	Government	Premier, State Council
CHU TEH	78	Inactive, old	Chairman, National Peoples Congress
CHEN YUN	59	Inactive, out of favor	None
LIN PIAO	56	Inactive, sick	Member, Military Affairs Committee; Minister of National Defense
TENG HSIAO-PING	64	Party	Secretary General, Central Committee

TUNG PI-WU	78	Inactive, old	Secretary, Control Commission
PENG CHEN	64	Party	Member, Party Secretariat; First Secretary, Peiping Municipal CCP Committee
CHEN YI	63	Government	Minister of Foreign Affairs
LI FU-CHUN	64	Government	Chairman, State Planning Commission; Member, Party Secretariat
PENG TE-HUAI	65	Inactive, out of favor	None
LIU PO-CHENG	72	Inactive, old	Member, Military Affairs Committee
HO LUNG	68	Less active, old	Member, Military Affairs Committee
LI HSIEN-NIEN	57	Government	Minister of Finance; Member, Party Secretariat
KO CHING-SHIH	64	Party	First Secretary, East China Regional Bureau of the CCP; First Secretary, Shanghai Municipal CCP Committee
LI CHING-CHUAN	59	Party	First Secretary, Southwest Regional Bureau of the CCP
TAN CHEN-LIN	61	Party	Member, Party Secretariat; Director, Agriculture and Forestry Staff Office, State Council

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

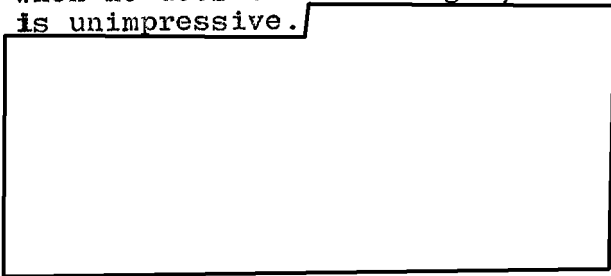
ULANFU	60	Party	First Secretary, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region CCP Committee
CHANG WEN-TIEN	66	Inactive, out of favor	None
LU TING-I	63	Party	Director, Propaganda Department
CHEN PO-TA	59	Party	Deputy Director, Propaganda Department
KANG SHENG	65	Party	Member, Party Secretariat
PO I-PO	57	Government	Chairman, State Economic Commission

640306 7A

SECRET

of productivity. Mao was once a forceful speechmaker and a prolific and effective writer, but no important production has been claimed for him since 1957. (Although Moscow now asserts he was the author of "Long Live Leninism," a key anti-Soviet polemic published in April 1960, he probably did no more than supply the general line of argument to his staff writers.) The last major article to appear under Mao's signature was in 1956. He last delivered a public speech in November 1957, and since then has made only infrequent addresses to closed party gatherings.

Greeting and impressing foreign visitors has become one of Mao's chief, and perhaps most useful, activities. Usually he has little to say to visitors, but relies instead on his presence and prestige to dazzle them. When he does talk at length, he is unimpressive.



Since 1957, Peiping has republished large quantities of Mao's pre-1949 writings on political and military doctrine, as a reminder of the master's greatness. After the publication of a one-page article in June 1958, however, no new work was attributed to Mao until mid-1963, when he began issuing brief personal statements denouncing

various aspects of US policy. Four statements--all unimpressive strings of clichés--have been issued, attacking US treatment of American Negroes (8 August 1963) and US actions in South Vietnam (29 August 1963), in Panama (12 January 1964), and in Japan (27 January 1964). Another attempt to show that Mao is still creative was made by the party journal People's Daily on 4 January 1964 when it published ten short poems by Mao, nine with post-1958 dates, alongside a large photograph depicting Mao in a state of blooming health.

Problem of the Succession

Totalitarian regimes such as China's historically have had difficulty arranging for the orderly transfer of political power, and Peiping seems aware that it may soon have to deal with this problem. The regime admits that among its foremost concerns are those of preserving the revolutionary spirit when the first generation passes on and preventing the kind of backsliding it claims has occurred in the USSR.

Peiping has been working assiduously to groom an immediate successor to Mao and has been attempting to develop a second generation of leadership that can be relied on to continue his policies. Mao's openly designated choice as heir is Liu Shao-chi, his first lieutenant in the party since 1945. A major step to increase Liu's stature was taken in 1959 when Mao turned over to Liu the

SECRET

SECRET

chairmanship of the Chinese People's Republic (CPR)--while retaining the more important post of party chairman. Although the duties of the CPR chairman are largely ceremonial, this transfer enhanced Liu's prestige by making him nominal chief of state and by conferring on him the title of "Chairman" hitherto reserved for Mao's sole use.

Next to Mao, Liu is China's foremost ideological spokesman. Except for Mao, Liu is the only Chinese whose works are required reading for party members. The chief document available for study is a 1939 pamphlet "How To Be a Good Communist," which was dusted off in 1962 and reissued in a re-edited version. The party rank and file have been told that in this work Liu made an "outstanding contribution" to Marxism-Leninism. A campaign is currently developing to have party officials study a speech given by Liu in October 1963 attacking "modern revisionism" and the USSR. The speech, described by Radio Peiping as "important" was not published, possibly because it was so intemperate that it would have given Moscow propaganda ammunition to support the charge that Chinese leaders are overly militant.

Liu has few apparent attributes of a leader. He is colorless, humorless, and shares none of Mao's charisma. Since the dramatic failure in 1960 of Leap Forward policies, with which Liu was closely associated, he has not publicly spoken out on domestic economic affairs. There

are indications that he has become bitter and xenophobic. Some Soviets are said to regard him as the most intransigently anti-Soviet of all Chinese leaders. Liu's visits to North Vietnam and North Korea in 1963 were occasions for strong anti-Soviet speeches. Non-Communists who talk to Liu are usually treated to harangues against India or the US.

Because Liu, now 66, is nearly as old and frail as Mao, the regime faces a problem of establishing a third in line. Most [redacted] believe

that after Mao and Liu, the succession will pass to Teng Hsiao-ping, party secretary general, rather than to his nominal superior, the comparatively moderate Chou En-lai. Teng seems to be favored by both Mao and Liu, has a strong position in the party, probably including supervision of the secret police, and is slightly younger than Chou.

Although the old guard may be able to retain control for several more years, they will soon have to begin admitting younger leaders into the inner circle of policy makers. They have been reluctant to do this because of their distrust of men who have not fully shared their revolutionary experiences. In recent years almost no new blood has been brought into the top echelons of party, government, or armed forces.

Little is known about the individuals who make up the next generation of leaders. Opinions

SECRET

on their character vary widely. Peiping has scoffed at US predictions that leadership attitudes might soften when younger men take over. In propaganda directed at domestic audiences, however, it is clear that Peiping fears that the newcomers will be a relatively pragmatic group that tends to set purely national interests above ideological considerations. These fears may well be valid when applied to the next generation of leaders. The core of the second echelon of leadership, however, is still made up of first-generation men who were junior officers during the Long March in the early 1930s. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] this second echelon is just as dogmatic as the present incumbents. [REDACTED] second-level leaders have been even more insulated from contact with the outside world and have been nurtured entirely in the indoctrinated atmosphere of the party apparatus.

In spite of Peiping's precautions, the succession may turn out to be disorderly. Men who had been willing to submerge their differences to work under Mao might be unwilling to accept the leadership of a less impressive person with differing views. A new, insecure leader might feel (as did Khrushchev) that he had to act swiftly to remove potential opposition.

An unstable situation could develop in several ways. Mao may deteriorate so far that Liu is tempted to push him aside before he is willing to retire voluntarily. Even if Liu takes over according to scheduled arrangements, he might be challenged by Teng Hsiao-ping--a highly ambitious man who might be unwilling to wait his turn. Either Liu or Teng could be challenged by Chou, although this seems unlikely. Chou has always given the impression that he is content to play a subordinate role, but he might be forced into the contest in self-defense to preserve even this position. Liu and Teng probably would win such a contest^{25X1} handily, because of their control^{25X1} of key instruments of power--the^{25X1} party machine and the armed forces--but there is an outside chance^{25X1} that in an intraparty dispute Chou might find enough support from moderate elements, particularly in the army, to overpower forces controlled by Liu and Teng.

In any case, there is little prospect for a reinvigoration of the Chinese leadership during the next few years. The process cannot even begin until Mao leaves the scene; and his departure may lead to a protracted power struggle, to the growth of factionalism, and, conceivably, to debilitating purges. [REDACTED]^{25X1}

* * *

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET